

THE ARABS OF ISRAEL

Pages from a Correspondent's Notebook

HAL LEHRMAN

RAMLEH (March 1949)—“Only six months,” a Rumanian at the Bir Yaakov immigrant reception center sighed. “If only I had come six months earlier. My cousin, he went to Tiberias. Now he’s a prince. He has an Arab villa, his own tailor shop, two helpers, a Garden of Eden nearly. For me there is a tent. Five weeks now, in a tent. This place here, it is called a ‘transit camp.’ So when is the transit? How long should a man with three children and a wife sit in a tent?” Some of the eight thousand others at Bir Yaakov, which I visited by taxi from my Tel Aviv base yesterday, are better off: they have, not a tent, but a few square feet in a wooden hut. In exchange, they are in “transit” as long as three months. Like the man with the lucky cousin in Tiberias, they share the dream of a Klondike of palaces and jobs in some wonderfully empty ex-Arab preserve. They don’t know—fortunately, because they are already desperate enough—what I learned at Ramleh today, that the dream has nightmare edges.

It is easy, amid all the discussion of the problem of the Arab refugees from Palestine—with seven-digit figures and large schemes occupying the center of the diplomatic stage—to forget the practical realities and the actual living relationships between Arabs and Jews that set the framework of the “Arab Problem.” Here, in these pages from a correspondent’s notebook, HAL LEHRMAN describes these intimate relations as they reveal themselves in Israel in their complex detail. Mr. Lehrman earlier (October 1949) reported on the larger issues of the Arab refugee problem as viewed in Washington and Tel Aviv, in the fourth of a series of articles that has been widely commended for its fair and balanced clarification of the problems besetting the development of the Jewish state. Mr. Lehrman has been a close student of Arab affairs since 1942, when, as head of the OWI in Turkey, he traveled back and forth between Istanbul and Cairo via Damascus, Beirut, and Jerusalem; in 1945 he attended the first meeting of the Arab League in Cairo.

In Ramleh, seven thousand Jewish immigrants have replaced fifteen thousand Arabs. I asked a newcomer how things were, and in three minutes I was the center of an angry protest meeting. Thin, haggard faces, stamped with memories of death camp and DP camp. For them the Promised Land—with its decrepit Arab hovels of mud and clay, its smell of stagnation, its overcrowding and underemployment—has lost its promise. Two days before I came, immigrants actually mobbed the office of the Labor Bureau because the jobs were fewer than the mouths that needed to be fed. . . . With the pressures of such a burden on Israel, the possibility of having to take back any large fraction of the half million Arabs who ran away is not a topic for calm conversation. A sufficient problem, most people feel, is the Arabs who remained—how to be fair and decent to them while Israel is stretching her meager economy to the limit and still not finding adequate work or housing for the Jews who keep pouring in without let, hindrance, or respite.

JAFFA (March)—There used to be about seventy-five thousand Arabs and twenty thousand Jews in this ancient town which rubs tattered elbows with modern Tel Aviv across the harbor. Today the Arabs number a little more than five thousand, the Jews have increased to seventy thousand. The Arabs are concentrated inside the small but neat Ajemi quarter. They live in a kind of reverse segregation; they need passes to go out, and Jews need passes to go in. We had to show our papers at the outer barricade, a row of barbed-wire barrels manned by young Jewish soldiers with light machine guns. The interior of the enclosure is policed by picked Arab constables. They have a Jewish commander. “All’s quiet,” said one of the barrel guards, a husky young *sabra* with blond hair and a ferocious “desert-rat” mustache. “Occasionally the houses are searched for Arab weapons, and a few old guns and pistols

get picked up. But there's been no real trouble."

The Jaffa Sporting Club, pre-war rendezvous of the fashionable *effendi*, is now the Arab Workers' Club. It enjoys the auspices of the Palestine Labor League, an Arab affiliate which Histadrut, the Jewish Labor Federation, organized way back in 1927. The new tenants evidently have no use for the dancing pavilion or tennis courts, but out in back a few Arabs were listlessly kicking around a soccer ball. "Some day, *inshallah*," grinned Gabriel Massri, club secretary, "we'll have a football team."

For the inevitable tiny tumbler of coffee Massri ushered us into his office, placarded with Histadrut slogans in Arabic. Under the British he was a clerk in the Palestine government's public works department. "I get along," he admitted, "but most of the other ex-civil servants among us have been eating up their savings. Our laborers are much better off. Pay of Arabs in the mandate port and sanitation services was a half-pound a day.

"When the Jews took over, they raised the minimum to £1.25 [\$3.75]. Now it's up to £1.45 in the port. Some masons and carpenters get as high as £2.40." "Are Arab and Jewish minimum rates the same?" "No, Jewish labor in the port starts at about two pounds. But remember," Massri leaned over eagerly, "the Jew pays from eight to ten pounds monthly in union dues, sick fund charges, rent, and so on; the Arab pays nothing. Just the same we're going to ask for equal pay—and equal obligations. We feel everything should be the same for everybody, regardless. Histadrut will back us when negotiations with the authorities begin. But we aren't in a hurry. It wouldn't do to raise Arab wages too fast. Our people wouldn't know how to use that much money or responsibility."

"Do you really think so?" I asked, inclining my head imperceptibly toward my uniformed Israeli companion while holding Massri's gaze. The Arab understood and laughed: "Oh, I say what I like in front of my Jewish friends." "Do your Arab friends feel as comfortable?" "They were frightened at first, but they feel much more secure now that the Jews haven't eaten them up. It would be better, of course, if ten thousand or so of Jaffa's Arabs could come back. The government says

they'll talk about it after all the Arab countries have signed a peace with the Jews. I hope so. I hope so very much. I would feel better myself. . . ."

We drove back past some handsome villas. Unwashed urchins were gamboling over the grounds. "What did he mean about the Arabs not paying rent?" I asked. "They don't," said Captain Sorosh, my Israeli guide. "We gathered them up from all over and installed them in this section of Jaffa. The real owners disappeared over the frontier. We figure that takes care of the rent problem. If any landlord ever returns, he'll have some claim to the property, but his tenants won't owe him a thing. As a matter of fact some of the new occupants are also making a clear cash profit. They aren't used to the magnificence, so they rent it out to Jews who get a special permit to escape from the housing crisis in Tel Aviv. The Arabs live in the basement and bury the rent money in the garden."

VERY few Arabs in Israel are sitting as pretty as Jaffa's Arab proletariat. Most other Arab centers don't have ports which are a steady source of jobs at good pay. Not many laborers are in a position to be rewarded for letting out houses which don't belong to them. In general the Arab peasant, professional, and mercantile classes have lost the props of their existence. Even in Jaffa Arab trade and commerce are fast asleep. Former officials and clerks of the Mandatory are selling their last possessions. Israeli authorities have set aside four hundred dunams of land to grow vegetables because the pre-war Arab food sources aren't even producing enough for the diminished native population.

The British departure, the war, and the Arab exodus destroyed the world the Arabs knew. You drive in any direction through the Israeli countryside and you find the landscape polluted with dead-silent Arab communities festering like carcasses in the sun, the houses disembowelled by explosion, blackened by fire, or rotted by neglect. I suppose there are a certain number of Arab places where life hasn't radically changed, but the only one I've seen so far is a village near Zikhron Yaakov, on the way to Haifa. The Arabs stayed put there despite the universal panic; they kept on tilling their land while the war passed them by; today their fields, homes, and way of life are intact. The

place is aptly called Furaidis, which means Paradise. But there can be no paradise, or even purgatory, for their brethren who fled. It isn't merely the wrecked houses, uncultivated lands, lost livestock and tools, gutted shops, vanished merchandise. Even if these could somehow be restored, they could not survive without the great hinterland of Arab consumers which once was their market.

As for the places occupied by the immigrants, it seems politically and economically impossible to dispossess Jews who have nowhere else to go. Return of the Arab refugees would mean a reconstruction of their economy from the ground up, which I doubt the Israeli treasury could finance without vast outside assistance even if it wanted to. We keep hearing that most of the fugitives cooped up in Egyptian-held Gaza or along the frontiers of Israel's neighbors want to come home. If so, they seem to be inhabiting a dreamland all their own. I wonder how many of these Arabs know that their pattern of living has been torn up.

ACRE (April)—When I last visited all-Arab Acre in 1942, about fourteen thousand people lived here. Today this historic town is cut in two. The "New City" is all Jewish. Its community of four thousand started a half-year ago around a nucleus of two hundred Palestinian families, mostly veterans of the Arab war. Later settlers were recruited from the Hungarian, Rumanian, Bulgarian, and Moroccan immigrations. The "Old City," inside a guarded enclosure, contains some thirty-five hundred Arabs now. Nearly half of them are not from Acre at all, but refugees who never made it across the border. Practically all of them, and many of the old inhabitants, are on the United Nations' dole, administered in this area through the Quakers, who distribute the food purchased by international funds.

Don Peretz, only American Jew on the Quaker voluntary teams serving in and around Palestine, took time off from supervising the dole to walk me through the nearly empty streets. The Arabs here seem to be either very old or very young. Every Arab kid has a big grin and a "*shalom*" for his Jewish conquerors. (In 1942 it was a big grin and the V-sign for his British rulers.) The men just sit quietly in every patch of shade. Two out of every three stalls in the once-

swarming bazaar are boarded shut. The only thing which hasn't changed is the cloud of flies over the meat impaled on hooks outside the butcher shops.

"You should have seen this place three months ago," Don said. "Not a shop was open. Now they're beginning again at the Nur match factory and the Spinney mineral-water works. That ought to make jobs for maybe two hundred Arabs. And an Arab-owned soap factory is getting a fresh start on a Histadrut loan. Here's a grocery cooperative run by Histadrut." An Arab clerk presided over the sparsely stocked shelves. He gave a tired shrug when I inquired if his job was satisfactory. "They pay me only twenty pounds [sixty dollars] a month. On that I feed my father, his two wives, my two brothers and my sister. We live in an empty four-room flat. The furniture was requisitioned by Jewish soldiers. I guess it's over in the New City now. In Haifa my family had a big house. But the British told us the Jews would cut our necks if we stayed. We can't go back. Our house is a Jewish house now."

Rashid Suleiman Ka'nan and his donkey came into Acre this morning with a special travel permit. He represents the four hundred members of Histadrut at Majd la-Kurum, twelve miles northeast of here. We invited each other to an outdoor café on the cobblestoned square. While a loudspeaker blared a musical Arabic lamentation, he explained that his mission was to plead for more food. "We are living mainly on provisions from before the war," he said. "The Quakers come and give oil, flour, and lentils once a month to the neediest cases. But we are all of us neediest cases."

"Here"—and he waved a long sheet of inky paper—"this is a list of the people who are asking for food. I have come to show this to the Jewish Military Governor." "Don't the Israeli authorities help too?" I asked. "Only with clothing. And with medicines. We have a government doctor. There is no bad sickness. But there is also no work. And also we have a great longing for our kinsmen who try to return home. Sometimes they make their way to us from what the Jews call 'the Triangle' [Arab-held territory in north-Central Palestine]. But when they are found out they are deported. They tell us it is good on the other side, but they wish to live with their own people again." "But if there isn't

enough food even without them," I said, "how would you manage with so many extra mouths?" "The government must manage," replied Rashid Suleiman in surprise. "The government must make work. Is it not the government that is the master, and has it not promised work for all?"

NAZARETH (April)—Yussuf bey al-Farhoun, Mayor of Nazareth, is a different cut of Arab from most of his distinguished compatriots. Elsewhere in Palestine when news arrived that the Jews were approaching—creating something resembling a panic—the Arab leaders, the same who had been preaching holy war, were the first to run. But in Nazareth, Yussuf bey announced he was staying, and did. His constituents took heart from this example—and also from authenticated reports that their brethren who had fled from other places were finding, not *houris* and jugs of wine behind the Arab frontiers, but plain misery. In consequence Nazareth was one Arab community where the population actually increased: to the twelve thousand who were there in the beginning, sixty-five hundred were added from the flood of refugees who streamed through the city during the time of terror. Twenty-five thousand peasants sat tight in the surrounding villages too. I drove through the Valley of Jezreel yesterday and rediscovered around Nazareth a small portion of the Palestine which used to be: the fellahin and their oxen on the ploughed field, the drowsing shepherd and his browsing flock, the Biblical pastoral. The land looks prosperous and well-turned. The government of Israel has had a part in this—tons of wheat and barley seed distributed free to the Arab peasants, and low-interest loans to ten thousand Arab families to carry them over to the next harvest.

In Nazareth itself the Jewish authorities are apparently making a genuine try for the equality promised in their Declaration of Independence. The city, awarded to the Arab state by the UN, is occupied territory, but the military government seems to be keeping the administration as Arab as possible within security limits. Of the thirty-man police force, only ten are Jews. The school teachers are one hundred per cent Arab, and so are the postal services. Food Control has eight or ten Arabs and one Jew. The courts are all Arab, including the top magistrate, first Arab

senior government officer to be appointed in Israel. The constables at the entrance to MG's headquarters were Arabs. The corridors swarmed with Arab clients lined up before the desks of Arab clerks. Even the secretary who escorted me to the door of the Military Governor was Arab. The first Jew I met in Nazareth was the Military Governor himself.

MAJOR Elisha Soltz, who looks and sounds like the *kibbutznik* he is, was troubled only by economic problems. "Before the war," he said, "the Arabs were supported by the tourist trade in Nazareth and by work in Haifa. Over there they found jobs in the oil refineries, the railways, the posts and telegraphs, the factories, the British military installations and the port. About eight hundred commuted the twenty-two miles to Haifa every day, and five hundred Nazareth Arabs lived in Haifa permanently. Nowadays, hardly one hundred from Nazareth have travel permits for Haifa. We are trying to spread out the work here—in the quarries, on public works, and odd jobs like olive-picking in abandoned Arab groves. If I could find employment for twenty-five hundred breadwinners, the Quakers, the Belgian relief people here, and I could all pack up and go home."

Major Soltz was not worried about the Communist situation, however. "Yes, they have good propagandists here, and some influence. But they are nowhere near a majority. Their one big advantage was that they had an Arab branch here, underground, which came out as soon as the Arab Army left Nazareth. They had a clear field until the Jewish parties could send Arab delegates in." But he laughed away the possibility that the Communists could keep growing on Arab discontent.

I went away musing over this remarkable optimism. The facts as I know them are that "Red Nazareth" gave the Communists some fifty per cent of its votes in Israel's first election last January, as against only 3.5 per cent collected by the Communists from the whole country. The local showing was all the more impressive because two-thirds of Nazareth's Arabs are Christians. The comrades here go piously to church with hammer-and-sickle badges pinned to their Sunday best. Last month, when a Catholic bishop from Belgium came here on a relief mission, the

Communist Arabs (who are mostly Greek Orthodox) picketed him. Their placards read, "No Alms from the Church," and, with wonderful irrelevance, "Down with Warmongers Bevin and Léon Blum."

As soon as I walked into CP headquarters here, I felt on familiar ground. It is fantastic how alike such headquarters are, whether I find them in Copenhagen, in Bucharest, or in Arab Nazareth. The same tough characters downstairs, the same hard looks upstairs, the same jargon and doubletalk. Anyone who still has doubts about the international nature of the sect would find a world tour very educational.

The head man, Saliba Khamis, neglected to shake hands, nor did he introduce his politburo of four who flanked him at the table. Saliba, aged twenty-nine, wore slick Western clothes, a silk tie of loud American design, and doodled with a Sheaffer fountain-pen. No, he didn't know how many party-members Nazareth had. There were different organizations—the trade union section, the youth group, the women's federation, and so on—and he really had no idea how much they added up to. Why was there a separate Arab Communist workers' union? Because Histadrut's Palestine Labor League was dominated by one reactionary Jewish party (Ben Gurion's moderate socialist Mapai). What was the circulation of *al-Ittihad* ("Unity"), the Arabic Communist newspaper published out of Haifa? He had no notion at all. Why did the Communists call themselves the Arab Liberation League in Nazareth? In Israel, he said, there was the Israel Communist party, but Nazareth was Arab. Partition said so. It should be part of an Arab state. But if Nazareth had to stay in Israel, what was the party program? Repatriation of all refugees who wanted to return, complete compensation for property losses, total reconstruction of the Arab economy, restriction of Jewish immigration to the limits imposed by the weakness of the Israeli economy. When I wound up by asking him if he wouldn't be arrested and his party outlawed again as soon as Nazareth fell under Arab control, he declined to answer except by looking sternly at the door.

I understood now that the Communists had been able to get Arab votes by a nationalist appeal, promising the impossible. But this didn't seem sufficient, nor did it explain Major Soltz's tranquillity of soul. The rest of

the puzzle fell into place at the local Histadrut office. My Arab informants asked me to withhold their names, but they spoke freely and angrily: "The military governor belongs to Mapam [the left-wing, pro-Soviet opposition to the moderate socialist coalition government]. All his chief aides are Mapamniks. Four times Soltz refused our application to open a Histadrut branch—until Tel Aviv itself gave permission. By then the Communists had grabbed a big following because they had the only employment office in the region. With Soltz's cooperation, they controlled all the available jobs. That's all the people wanted—jobs. They didn't mind being Communists if only it gave them work. They don't know what Communism means. They never heard of Stalin. We are finally operating our own employment office, but it's slow going. We had a telegram from Jaffa for forty mechanics; Soltz delayed with the travel permits until a Histadrut man came up specially from Tel Aviv. For a long time, Soltz wouldn't allow our secretary into MG headquarters. Do you know how to stop Communism among our people? Take away the restrictions on Arab travel. Give us jobs for them. There won't be ten Communists left in Nazareth. . . ."

[Later, in Tel Aviv, from an inside and high-up Mapainik: "We're on to the Mapam game. They thought they could maybe win the Arab Liberation League over to their side, and they were even willing to help it as a Communist outfit, just so they could keep the Arabs from coming to us. The first nice opportunity, Comrade Soltz will get his walking papers."]

SA'SA (April)—This is an "American" kibbutz, at a strategic mountain crossroad on the Lebanese frontier. Twenty-five of its members come from Canada, four from Mexico, two from Panama, and the remaining sixty-seven from the United States. The colony started in January adjacent to evacuated Arab Sa'sa. One's first impression is the penetrating smell of stagnant water—from the layers of Arab villages built one on top of the other for centuries. Another odd note is the sight of Arabs toiling in a Jewish kibbutz. "It's our manpower shortage," said Aryeh Greenfield, twenty-four, late of Chicago. "We 'inherited' olive groves, fig trees, and vineyards all around here. Before the

Arabs took off, they must have had five hundred working here. When we dig all the rocks out, we'll do intensive and efficient farming. But meanwhile the land has to be looked after or the fruit will go bad for years. And there are only ninety-eight of us. So we hire any native help we can find."

Every "legal" Arab holds an Israeli identity card. It establishes his right to be in the country, and weeds out the illegal infiltrators. But, according to Greenfield, it's impossible to plug the border here. Arab Sa'sa actually has land on the Lebanese side. These Galileean hills are a traditional smugglers' highway. It was a supply route for Fawzi al-Kawukji's irregulars early in the war. Stray Arabs turn up at the kibbutz every day and are handed over to the Israeli military, but Greenfield guesses three times that many filter past toward the South.

INFILTRATION is also especially brisk from the Negev and Jerusalem. In a pre-election census last November, sixty-nine thousand Arabs were counted in Israeli-held territory. The number has now risen to at least one hundred and fifty thousand. Of these, only about ten thousand were obtained by favorable adjustments of the armistice frontier with King Abdullah's troops. That makes no less than seventy thousand unauthorized Arabs in only five months. "We cannot assert categorically," an Israeli spokesman has privately told me, "that these people are all being deliberately sent in to stand by for the signal to stab us in the back. Our guess is that most of them return simply to escape their wretched life across the lines. But their uncontrolled presence is an enormous risk. Besides, it takes a lot of troops and police away from other duties to round them up. Even at that, our security measures are obviously inadequate. We'll have to tighten them up. We also have got to make the Arabs realize that Israel is now a sovereign state and that they can't wander in whenever they feel like it. The official enemy Arab propaganda helps this along by pretending we just don't exist. Why, we get Arabs flying in from Cyprus expecting to walk off the airfield; they're amazed when we stop them; they've no idea what's been happening here. If we don't seal up the frontier, we'll have a hard time as soon as the standard of living of our Arabs starts climbing again. It'll be

like in the time of the mandate. Ten per cent of the Arabs in Palestine then weren't Palestinian at all. They simply walked in because life was so much better here."

BEERSHEBA (April)—It seems to be as easy to get out of Israel as into it. On our way down here we forded a desolate *wadi* under a blown-up bridge below Julis. The Simca began steaming from the effort of pulling out of the mud. Captain Applebaum, my escort, drove on amid an absolute stillness, looking for a house and water. There was a lone Arab in a field. "I'll ask him," said Applebaum, and jumped out. "That Arab was terrified," he reported. "Probably an infiltrator from Gaza, where the Egyptians are. I've half a mind to arrest him." We tried another road, but it kept bending toward the sea. Finally we turned back to the *wadi*, and this time we bogged down in it. While we were pushing and heaving, a border patrol of six Israeli soldiers stepped from the woods. The road we had been on was no-man's-land, and led directly into Gaza. "If you'd arrested that Arab," they told us, "you'd have violated the armistice. . . ."

Above Beersheba we stopped briefly at Mishmar ha-Negev, an Israeli Army post. A composite of Israel's loyal minorities. The ranking officers are Jewish, with Circassian subalterns, Druse non-coms, and Arab soldiers. Their insignia is a brace of crossed scimitars over a Star of David. Such people fought well as volunteers on the Israeli side, to avenge being pushed around by the Mufti and Kawukji mercenaries, or because they had always gotten on well with the Jews. But they have no use for each other. The Circassians wouldn't even discuss their Druse NCO's, and a Druse sergeant qualified his Arab men for me as "dirty savages."

In the Beersheba Military Governor's antechamber, we encountered a character out of a Hollywood version of *Revolt in the Desert*. A Bedouin chieftain, in town to cadge a few sacks of wheat for his tribe. One of the fifteen thousand nomads who have placed themselves under Israeli authority. Six feet tall, flowing robes and desert head-dress, steel-gray chin-whiskers, a coppery face like the Indian on a penny. He carried two bandoliers filled with bullets across his chest, two pistols in his sash, and a dagger in a silver sheath. A few respectful paces behind him staggered

his small son, about nine years old, lugging a long carbine.

WE SPENT last night at Revivim, one of the southernmost kibbutzim in the Negev. . . . This morning, a few miles below us as we headed back north, four Israeli soldiers in a military vehicle were ambushed and murdered by Arab raiders.

JERUSALEM (May)—I nearly made it today. I nearly got over officially to the Arab lines. Missed it by just ten yards.

It's been difficult even for non-Jewish writers to cross over from Israel. Ken Bilby, of the *New York Herald Tribune*, did, but he says the Israeli visa in his passport gave him a hard time. Arab officials who saw it became instantly unfriendly or downright menacing. In Tel Aviv a UN official was horrified when I suggested his arranging a safe-conduct for me. "They'd tear you to pieces," he said. The American consulate in Jerusalem declined even to mention it to the Arabs. Bill White, of the *Reader's Digest*, thought we might go over to Amman together and chat with King Abdullah—but he had to drop me from the project after proposing it to our consulate.

Yesterday I asked my friend George Barnes, who represents the UN Conciliation Commission here, at least to try fixing an interview with Abdullah bey el-Tel, Arab Civil Governor in the Old City. There were three of us: Irwin Shaw, of *The Young Lions* and the *New Yorker*, photographer Bob Capa, on assignment for *Holiday*, and myself, of *Fortune*. We're all Americans working for non-Jewish publications—but we're Jewish, which makes a big difference to an Arab. Well, Barnes managed it. Abdullah bey would see us. But not in the Old City. He couldn't take responsibility for our safety. He would meet us in the neutral zone between the two lines.

This morning, just before nine o'clock Arab time (ten o'clock Israeli daylight-saving time), Shaw, Capa, and I walked past the last Jewish sentry post and picked our way around the tank traps, barricades and debris outside Mandelbaum Gate. The "gate" is really a square, every building on its perimeter caved in by shell and grenade, the whole place weeping of desolation. Appropriately, the only half-intact structure has a large no-

tice identifying it as the Evangelistic Bible Mission Society.

Abdullah bey climbed out of a long black car behind a barrier manned by British-trained Arab Legionnaires who were alertly watching our cautious approach. He walked forward to meet us. He wore an ordinary business suit topped by a red fez. He seemed in his early thirties, this personal representative and namesake of the wily old monarch of Hashemite Jordan.

We shook hands all around. He apologized for not permitting us further into Arab territory. He suggested to Capa that the UN photographer probably could give him the pictures of the Old City he needed. As for the rest of us, Abdullah was quite willing to discuss anything we'd like discussed right there, in the no-man's-land between two worlds.

We asked him about the abnormality of a Jerusalem cut in two. He agreed. He implied that internationalization of the entire city would not be "practical," but that if two distinct Arab and Jewish municipalities were legalized, "there ought to be the largest possible circulation between the two sides." He would even like to see the Jews come back in and rebuild their district in the Old City, which had been destroyed during the fighting. "Of course," he added, "we would expect in exchange that our people would be allowed back to their homes on the Jewish side" (mostly undamaged villas owned by wealthy Arabs now in Beirut or Cairo, and occupied by Jewish fugitives from the Old City). Abdullah bey ended by saying that the Jews (at no point did he say—nor has any other Arab I've talked with said—"the Israelis")—the Jews ought also to take back Arab refugees from other parts of evacuated Palestine. "We have twenty thousand homeless Arabs in our Jerusalem zone, and ten thousand local Arabs who are poverty-stricken. Everybody is crowded and unhappy. We hope the Jews will be reasonable about this."

Now that I've traveled every corner of this country, it has become clear that the Israeli troops must have been decidedly tough even with non-combatant Arabs during the war. There are, for instance, too many dynamited, desolated native villages where little or no fighting ever occurred. The Jews simply came in and smashed the place, often sparing

only the mosques. I know there are explanations for this havoc: the Israeli Army at first was less an organized military machine than a patchwork of semi-guerrilla units habituated to commando tactics; reprisal destruction of houses and villages is a classic Middle Eastern method of all armies against dissident natives; because the Jewish settlements were generally in the valley and exposed to the Arab settlements, which were generally in the hills, it seemed good strategy to wipe out the Arab advantage whenever the chance came along; and so on. But it is obvious, too, that the Israelis—themselves surprised by the scope and speed of the Arab exodus—did an extra-thorough job of destruction to make sure that the Arabs would have nothing to come back to. There is no evidence that this was official government policy, but it certainly must have been in the minds of many local commanders. It is also plain that, for a long time, nobody was wise enough to foresee that some day Jewish immigrants would fill up whatever empty Arab areas had not been hopelessly wrecked. Looting was not too zealously repressed either. No less an authority than the present Speaker of the Knesset, Joseph Sprintzak, has been quoted as saying that the looting of Arab homes and shops was a major defeat for the new government of Israel.

What about atrocities? Israel knows and laments Dir Yassin, where Irgun massacred more than two hundred Arab men, women, and children. Native fear of more Dir Yassins must be added to all the other reasons for the mad flight of the Arab people—such as their own bad conscience, their leaders' incitements, and British assistance. Were there any other outrages? A UN observer who goes over frequently to the Arab refugee camps assures me darkly that "the Arabs were murderous, yes, but the Jews were no lilies, believe me." This by itself would be unconvincing, especially since the gentleman persistently deplores Israeli behavior in all other matters as well. I am more shaken by the expressions of grief and shame I have privately received from non-political but prominent Israelis whose personal integrity is beyond question. "The Israeli soldier has looted, burned, and slaughtered," I have been told, "and it is no comfort for us that soldiers of every other army do likewise." It is even hinted that certain officers actually ordered

their troops to let themselves go. The best evidence that there were atrocities—and, I suppose, the best apology for them, if such things can be apologized for—came to me from a high-ranking veteran of the Jerusalem siege. "Our soldiers," he said, "were no worse than the Americans or British. They were even better. But they had awful provocation. Once sixteen of the boys on patrol were ambushed and killed. We found them lying in a field. Their hearts were cut out. Their eyes were gouged. Their testicles were sewed up in their mouths. Well, that kind of news gets around. When Jews from DP camps and Jews from Morocco talk it over at their mess, they don't react like Harvard graduates. . . ."

TEL AVIV (May)—Not many Israelis torment themselves with the moral and political implications of injustice to the Arabs, but among those who do are some of the finest spirits in the land. They hold to the doctrine of Judah Magnes, that "we should enter the Promised Land, not in the Joshua way, but with peace, sacrifice, and love . . . and a determination to do nothing that cannot be justified before the conscience of the world." The small band of men who cling to this high ideal despite the brutal march of recent history are filled with dread over the consequences of a refusal by Israel to be generous in solution of the Arab question. They feel that no long-range peace is possible, with the Arab world outside or the Arab remnants inside Israel, unless the refugee crisis is resolved with honor and justice.

Such views would be cried down by the great majority of the country and virtually all its leaders. It was not always so. In the beginning nobody could conceive of a new Israel without a large Arab population. Even when they were already in full flight, the eventual return of most of the Arabs was taken for granted. Lionel Feitelberg, one of the top people in the government press office, reflected the general sentiment when he wrote for a South African paper: "We have seen that it is not possible to achieve cooperation with a people living under a feudal system. . . . Our war . . . is not against the simple and deluded Arab peasant. . . . Many Arabs will return. . . . We shall have to try to raise them to a level nearer our own." Lionel doesn't talk or think that way any more. Since then, the immigrant flood has engulfed

the country, the places of the Arabs have been occupied, their departure has been transmuted by time from a curious phenomenon into a miracle of good luck. Spurred by the perpetual fear of external Arab attack, the idea of "good riddance" of internal Arabs has taken hold.

For my Foreign Ministry friends, the Arab innocent who was misled by his cowardly leaders has ceased to exist or, rather, has become a villain who turned his hand against the Jews and must take the consequences. As for the Arab states, the view here is that their invasion created the Arab problem and now let them solve it. A sign of rapid "maturity" at Ha-Kirya is the tendency to borrow the cynicism of older governments. "Minorities are a throwback, a political retrogression," a close associate of Foreign Minister Sharett advises me. "The modern trend is to transfer minorities, not re-establish them, particularly when a minority has decamped of its own accord." Someone has reminded me that the "Christian" states can hardly expect Israel to improve on their own precedents: the forced deportation of German-Hungarian minorities from Czechoslovakia, wartime Britain's shipment of enemy aliens to Canada, and even America's concentration of her Japanese in Colorado and Arizona. . . .

If I could see some actual *physical* possibility of reintegrating a large number of refugees, I might be able to work up more practical enthusiasm for the Arab case. However, even lacking that, I see sufficient cause for alarm in the likelihood that Tel Aviv's present attitude, bordering on cockiness, will hurt the *Israeli* case. There is a certain willingness here to take back some refugees who are close relatives of those who stayed behind, and to make some compensation for abandoned land. Otherwise, the Israeli position consists only of offers of plans and arguments for settling the refugees everywhere except in Israel—at international expense. There is some discussion of the idea of "exchanging" Arabs for Jewish minorities in Arab countries like Iraq and Syria (though Tel Aviv's right to dispose of such Jewish minorities might be debatable). And Israel is bent on categorical refusal to negotiate any settlement at all until the Arab states agree to peace terms. This can end only by giving Israel a bad world press. There is considerable sympathy abroad for the urgent plight of homeless

Arabs in refugee camps. Against this appeal on humanitarian grounds, the firmness of Tel Aviv, right or wrong, is going to sound harsh. It will not make friends for Israel.

AS FAR as the Israeli Arabs are concerned—at least the ones who are here "legitimately"—it looks as if they will get an even break.

Right now they have plenty to grouse about. It may be a peculiar word to use, but "ghetto" is the one I think of for the guarded enclosure where Arabs are concentrated in Jaffa and other once-important Arab towns. The restraints on travel put a competitive handicap on Arab workers in finding jobs and on Arab businessmen in drumming up trade. Many Arabs complain, too, that they are barred from tending their farms any distance from their places of enforced residence, that their lands are spoiling in neglect, and that they are being taxed for property from which they derive no benefit.

But such inequities can be blamed on the wartime emergency and there is no reason to think they won't be lifted bit by bit as the need for military security decreases. One mistake that had nothing to do with security was the abolition of the Ministry of Minorities, which did good work in the early months as a clearing house for Arab problems in all categories. It seems the Ministry's liquidation was partly due to its having been packed with Mapamniks, the brethren of the extreme Left, who used their jobs to build the party's Arab political fences. Anyway, Arab affairs now are scattered among a dozen bureaus, to everybody's confusion. Sooner or later the government will need to set up some kind of agency or ministry again to coordinate the Arab policies of all departments.

Meanwhile, Israel has already done much to fulfill the pledge that the Arabs will be made equal citizens. Arabs participated freely in the elections—even Arab women, for the first time in their history. Three Arabs sit in the Israeli parliament. An Arab translator in a glass booth, just as at Lake Success, renders all Hebrew speeches into Arabic and vice-versa, with headphones available for the deputies. Arabs have large representation in their local councils, townships, and public services, and entire freedom of religious worship. Many Arab schools have been reopened, and new ones set up where none previously

existed, at Jewish expense; coeducation has been introduced to lift the Arab woman out of her traditionally degraded status; progressive educational reforms are being tactfully begun, as one Jewish Oriental scholar puts it, "to remove the cataracts from Arabia's once beautiful eyes." Arab school-children are getting free lunches, expectant Arab mothers free care. The Arabs are probably receiving more state medical attention than they ever had from the British. Their rations are equal in quantity and quality to Jewish rations. They are drawing the full benefits of the Workers' Sick Fund at cut rates. Arab wages are double and sometimes almost triple the pre-Israeli minimums. The Labor Ministry has been rebuilding some factories to make work for the Arabs. Producer cooperatives have started with Histadrut loans, and consumer cooperatives have sprung up in nearly every Arab village.

However, there continues to be serious Arab unemployment. Arab merchants who survived the exodus are famished for customers. Resentment among the Arabs is deep against the "requisitioning" of property belonging not merely to Arabs who left the country but to Arab "DPs" who fled from one place to another inside Israel, and even to Arabs who did not budge. The dilemma of equal pay for equal work is still far from solution, especially since some important sectors of the old Palestinian economy depended greatly on cheap native labor.

ONE of the most serious difficulties is the crisis of Arab leadership. The imams fled from the mosques, the kadis from the courts, the doctors, the teachers, practically all the intellectuals. Only workers and peasants remained. The fabric of Arab society will have to be remade from shreds and patches. When the staff of the government-sponsored newspaper *al-Yom* ("The Day") was being organized, a competent Arab editor was nowhere to be found in Israel—except among the Communist Arabs. There were candidates enough, but none was qualified. An Arabic-speaking Jew had to take the job. The paper's circulation has been feeble. The cultural level of the existing Arab community, separated from its middle class and intelligentsia, is abysmally low. Many of the Arabs can't read, and many of those who do simply aren't interested. Besides raising the Arabs out of

this lethargy, the government will have to protect them against the hostility of certain Jewish elements, particularly those veterans who return to a housing shortage after military service against the Arabs, and those immigrants who exchange a European DP camp for an Israeli transit camp. More than once, police have had to eject ex-soldiers who established themselves in flats and houses after dispossessing their Arab occupants by force.

Can the Arabs ever really be "assimilated" into the Israeli pattern? Government specialists say yes—given enough time and tranquillity. Even now, there are hopeful signs. A group of Arabs is planning to start a kibbutz of its own. Many Arab workers are affiliating with Israeli cooperatives, and some of them are active in organizational and welfare work among their own people, who previously received little from their leaders beyond inflammatory speeches. S., one of the Foreign Ministry's top orientalists, is quite confident: "It may take five years or fifty, but the under-privilege of the Arabs will inevitably disappear. Legally there will soon be no discrimination at all. Practically it will take time, because the Arabs start so far behind. But they will have our standard of living some day, they will wear our clothes, they will speak our language. Assimilation will be automatic. Palestine's Arabs have always adopted the language and customs of their conquerors. As a matter of fact, racially they aren't Arabs at all, just Arabic-speaking. They have been here four millennia. In their time they were Canaanites, Romans, Greeks, Turks. I think one can even play with the idea that many of them, at least those in the hills, are actually descended from the ancient Jews. You know, about seventy per cent of the older Arab villages have names that don't mean anything in Arabic. They seem to have come down from Hebrew via Aramaic. For instance, there are seven places called 'Jaba,' which is nothing in Arabic but has its Aramaic or Hebrew equivalent in Giva, meaning 'hill.' They have six villages named 'Tira'—the exact Hebrew word for 'enclosure.' . . ."

NEW YORK: Postscript (November)—The Lausanne "peace" conference has convened and adjourned without visible achievement, and once again a UN mission has gone forth, sending back recommendations on Arab

refugees. Inside Israel more and more restrictions against Arabs are being lifted, some Arab orphans and other children swept up in the mass flight are being returned to Israel, certain Palestinian Arab PWs are being released and allowed to go back to their homes in Israeli territory, Tel Aviv has become willing to discuss the re-entry of one hundred thousand Arab refugees if peace is established. The Vatican, pressing its case on Jerusalem in the face of strong Israeli opposition, has seen fit to protest about Israeli mistreatment of Arabs—though no thunder has come from Rome concerning the Jews of Iraq. In the months since I sailed from Haifa for the Turkish port of Izmir last May, the number of Jewish immigrants marooned in Israeli "reception" centers has nearly doubled.

Here at home I have found much graver concern than in Israel with the *moral* side of the Arab problem. This is quite natural, if only because American Jews are more remote from the physical pressure of Israel's economic and military difficulties, and more sensitive to world opinion. Which does not, of course, in any sense weaken their right to be concerned with the moral aspect, or diminish whatever truth exists in their argument. They see the stern Israeli attitude toward refugees as a potential menace to liberal principles, to world Jewry as a spokes-

man for those principles, and to Israel herself as an isolated community in a hostile Arab world. They have fought for European restitution of property to Jews returning from Hitler's camps, for the right of minorities to be considered as loyal citizens instead of latent fifth-columnists, and against the transfer of populations by governmental fiat. The principles on which these good fights have relied may be vitiated, they fear, by Tel Aviv's contrary leanings in the matter of the Arabs.

FOR myself, frankly, I simply do not know how much virtue one can urge on a new state struggling for survival. Would a generous policy toward refugees conciliate the Arab states? They have never been conciliated by any previous Jewish generosity. Should Israel be expected to do better than other countries? Certainly Israel's treatment of her Arabs seems saintly by contrast with Iraq's treatment of her Jews. But, conversely, can a Jewish state content itself with emerging favorably from odious comparisons with Iraq or even with Europe? Must not a Jewish state live by far higher ethical standards, as its devotees and friends always said it must and would? Or is all this hopelessly and romantically ideal in a world of harsh political realities?